



# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **House National Security Committee**

### **Floyd D. Spence, Chairman**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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#### **STATEMENT OF HONORABLE FLOYD D. SPENCE**

#### **MILITARY SERVICE SECRETARIES' HEARING**

*Wednesday, March 12, 1997*

Today the committee continues its consideration of the Fiscal Year 1998 defense budget and will hear from the three service secretaries. Secretary West, Secretary Dalton, and Secretary Widnall, welcome back. We are pleased you could be with us this morning.

As we continue consideration of the Fiscal Year 1998 defense budget, it is critical that the committee understand the challenges the men and women in uniform face today and how our actions will affect them. At a minimum, I hope our witnesses will address three central issues: dramatic shortfalls in defense modernization; the stresses on force readiness and quality of life resulting from a smaller force, declining budgets and a higher pace of operations; and how each of you expects these issues to be considered in the Quadrennial Defense Review.

Over the past few years, this committee has been at the forefront of the fight to improve the lagging pace of modernization. The pending budget request once again postpones addressing the procurement problem until next century, which leaves it to some future administration to fix. We are all familiar with and frustrated by the modernization problem. Modernization programs, already underfunded, are being used over and over again as bill payers for near-term operational shortfalls. The Administration is mortgaging our technological future and, in the process, creating a procurement "bow wave" of immense proportions.

Likewise, I hope our witnesses will address the problems facing a force that is being increasingly asked to "do more with less." I believe that diminished training, inadequate maintenance, personnel turbulence and an

eroding quality of life are weakening each of the military services. As I said last week, although the tip of the spear remains sharp, the rest of the force is suffering in order to keep it that way. I believe that these kinds of readiness problems have begun to place at risk our ability to wage high-intensity conflict in the manner called for by the national military strategy.

Finally, I look forward to our witnesses' assessment of the QDR. If taken seriously, the QDR could be an opportunity to address our military's growing problems and to set it on the right course for the next century. However, if the QDR simply becomes an excuse for further budget cuts, delayed modernization or additional force structure reductions, or if it becomes an exercise in how much strategy we can afford rather than articulating and resourcing the strategy we need, the QDR will only worsen the problems we see today.

Accordingly I look forward to the testimony of our distinguished witnesses on these and other important issues affecting their services.